

~~No 4~~ 4

A
DISCOURSE
OF
ENTHUSIASM,

Deliver'd in a

Visitation-Sermon,

AT

GUILFORD,

On *Wednesday* in *Whitson-Week*.

By WILLIAM WHITFELD,
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *E. Holt*, for *Tho. Bennet*; at the *Half-Moon* in *St. Paul's Church-yard*, 1698.

DISCOURSE

OF

ERRATA in the First Sermon, occasioned by the Absence of the Author.

Correct False Pointing and unnecessary Parentheses.

Page 1. Text, r. 1 St. John. P. 5. l 6. r. from such Evidences. P. 11. l. 1. r. in Pref. ad l. P. 12. l. 9. r. Apostles. l. 22. r. Ecstasick Feruor. l. 1. r. Inform. P. 14. l. 7. r. attrax. P. 15. l. 13. r. in the Flesh of Man and Nature of God. P. 18. l. 35. r. as it was long since f. what. P. 20. l. 30. esteemed. P. 21. l. 27. r. our own Souls f. their own. P. 22. l. 17. r. f. gives.



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To the Right Reverend Father in God

PETER,

Lord Bishop of WINCHESTER.

My Lord,

I Humbly present to Your Lordship these Two Discourses, the One of Enthusiasm, the Other of the Necessity of Revelation, and an Holy Life, being Printed by Your Lordship's Command, at the Request of the Reverend Persons of the Audience.

I know not indeed how my Brethren will answer to themselves their desire of making these Sermons Publick, unless it is a greater Satisfaction to them to testifie to your Lordship their Approbation of what they esteemed True and Orthodox, than to shew the exactness and severity of their Judgment; as it is natural for good Men to be less by less Imperfections, that they may oppose themselves to strong and prevailing Errors. And such it is reasonable to believe those, which proceed from a spreading Wild Enthusiasm, and from the bold assaults made daily upon the Reveald Word of God. Wherein, tho' we have to deal with very different Adversaries, yet I do not see but that the same Arguments may be urged against them without interfering with each

The Epistle Dedicatory.

other: so, as not unjustly to depress the right use of Natural Reason in our Enquiries into Religion, nor yet to exalt its strength beyond Measure, and above Revelation. One of which two Rocks it is often split upon, by running too far to avoid the other.

The Learning of the Auditory will excuse me in using Hints many times, rather than drawing out Arguments to their full length and just conclusion. But nothing under the Authority of Your Lordship's Commands can plead for my appearing in Publick, especially in the last Controversie which hath so lately employ'd the ablest Persons of our Church. After which, my utmost Ambition is only to shew my Well-meaning and Integrity in the same Cause, and to hope that the publishing of these Sermons may remain a Testimony of my ready Obedience to Your Lordship's Commands, as becomes,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's, most Obedient
Humble Servant,

William Whitfeld

A SERMON.

I St. John, Chap. IV. Verse 1.

Beloved believe not every Spirit ; but try the Spirits whether they are of God : Because many false Prophets are gone out into the World.

IT was ordain'd by the Allwise Providence of God, that the Church of Christ should receive its complete Establishment from the Power and Guidance of the Holy Ghost, which (as on this time) were pour'd out in a most extraordinary Measure upon the Apostles. And from the first Ages of Christianity, a Foundation hath been laid for many foul Errors, in a pretence and semblance of a like Authority from the Holy Spirit; through which the Body of Christ hath been miserably divided, and the Administrations and Doctrines (constituted and settled by the Spirit which led into all Truth,) have been opposed and corrupted by the Contradictions of this other Spirit, presuming upon the same Power from God.

Now if there shall be any such Persons unto whom it hath pleas'd God to communicate his Holy Spirit in as great a degree, and to as important an end, as he did to the Apostles

stles of Christ, These certainly are the best qualified to declare his Will, and have a Right to be the *only* Instructors of Mankind; but if this shall prove to be a counterfeit Title, how great is the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost! Or if it be a mistaken Presumption, how strong is that Error which is grounded upon a Persuasion, that it is dictated by a Spirit who cannot err! But (whether mistaken or counterfeit) it is of most pernicious Consequence to the Church of God, and a dangerous Temptation to the Souls of Men.

For Errors of this Nature are not so harmless and indifferent, as some Men are pleas'd to represent them: This Warning in my Text is not unnecessary, nor the frequent Admonitions of our Blessed Saviour in vain, to beware of False Prophets: It was for some weighty End, that the discerning of Spirits was coeval in the Church with the other Gifts of the Holy Ghost; and to some wise purpose, that St. Paul gave that Charge to the Governors of the Church of *Ephesus*, to take heed to themselves, and to the Flock of Christ; *For I know (says he) that after my departure, grievous Wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the Flock of Christ.*

These early, and often-repeted Cautions, do speak danger; they admonish of false Guides unsafe to follow, and call upon us as Christians, to shew forth the Charity and Love of the Gospel in Meekness and Tenderneſs, with hearty Endeavours to reclaim Men from Errors which may endanger their Salvation: But in a very distinguishing manner, my Reverend Brethren, are they passionately addressed to all that are Ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; beseeching us as faithful Shepherds to feed the Flock of Christ, warning us to defend them from ravenous Wolves which come in Sheeps-Cloathing, and from Robbers that enter not by the Door into the Sheepfold; and (if there shall be any such) commanding us as *careful Watchmen*, to lift up our Voice like a Trumpet, and to shew the People their Transgressions.

Which

Which that we may do, I will endeavour in my following Discourse,

I. To examine into the several Pretences, which may be made to this extraordinary Residence of God's Holy Spirit.

II. I will lay down one general Rule by which we may try the Spirits whether they are of God.

III. I will shew what a Measure of God's Holy Spirit (as we may humbly presume) is a necessary and sufficient Qualification for the Ministry of the Gospel.

I. To examine into the several Pretences, which may be made to this extraordinary Residence of God's Holy Spirit.

And to do this (amongst several other Warrants from Scripture,) my Text gives me full Commission; which says, *that many false Prophets are gone out into the World.* If there are *false Teachers*, it concerns us much to enquire seriously which are the true; and if *many* were gone out so early, we may well suppose their Numbers to be enlarged, and their Errors to be increas'd at this distance of time, and our selves consequently to be under great Obligations to make a stricter Trial.

In order to which, let us examine,

1. How far we are to believe their Pretences, who lay their Claim *peremptorily* to a most extraordinary Measure and Residence of God's Holy Spirit.

2. What the Title may be, which is grounded upon a Supposition of Miracles.

3. What the Claim is from Enthusiasm.

As to the first ; We may justly affirm against all that shall lay their Claim peremptorily to these Gifts of the Holy Ghost, that no Man whatsoever is to be believ'd in a Matter of this great Consequence, meerly upon his own Authority. No wise Man will suffer his Assent to be exacted thus from him in things of common Account ; and how much less ought we to be unwarily wrought up into a Belief in the Cause of Religion ! Our Faith indeed in all immediate Revelations from God is necessary, but not so our Belief in the Word of any Man ; which (altho' it should be sent from God, yet) cannot require our Faith, without appealing first to our Reason with sufficient Proofs to convince the Judgment, and to evidence the Truth of the Allegation.

And therefore, where it hath pleas'd God to send any into the World with an extraordinary Embassy from himself, he hath always set some Mark of Power upon those his Servants, by which they and their Mission might be known ; as may be instanced in all them who have hitherto come to declare the Will of God to Mankind : Whether their Commission was to admonish his People of something which had been already commanded (as the Prophets of the Old Testament ;) or whether their Errand were to proclaim some new unknown thing to the World, about which God's Will had not been revealed, as the Apostles, and all the first Preachers of the Christian Religion in the early Ages of the Church : All which, came prepar'd either with Signs and Wonders, or with Prophecies and Gifts, by which they were enabled to give a demonstration of their being sent from God, before ever they requir'd a Belief of that which they were to declare in his Name.

And since we know no other way of God's Will being communicated to us, but by the Mediation of our *Natural* Faculties, (neither to the Prophet from God, nor from
Him

Him to other Men,) it cannot be expected, but that we should make use of the same Powers to judge of the Inspiration it self: For how supernaturally soever the Vision or Revelation may come upon the Person inspired, yet he has no other means to be ascertain'd that it is from God, but upon a Proof arising upon such Evidences, as may convince his Judgment after due Application and examining into them; either by the Testimony of external visible Signs presented to the Sence, or by the Energy of some vigorous Impressions upon the Mind, appealing to his Reason for the Certainty of the Revelation: So that when the Prophet himself cannot, (without the Assistance of his Sence and Reason,) judge whether the Inspiration comes from God, how much rather ought we to call in the same Aids, in examining and deliberating of the same thing, when it shall be offer'd unto us from Man?

A Warrant we have for *this Scrutiny*, from the Mission of Moses and Jesus Christ, (the Two greatest Prophets which have been sent from God :) When Moses was call'd from Jethro's Flock to be a Leader of the Children of Israel, he debated much about his Mission, and question'd and argu'd with God, how he should make it evident that he was sent by Him: Upon which God reveals unto him his incommunicable Name [**I am that I am.**] But when Moses doubted still [and answer'd and said; but behold they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my Voice; for they will say that the Lord hath not appear'd unto Thee.] God then gives him the Power of working a strange Miracle, by turning his Rod into a Serpent, and by making his hand leprous, and restoring it afterwards to sound Flesh. --- And this Power, God tells him was given, that they might believe that the Lord God of their Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, had appear'd unto him, *Exod. 4.*

As for our Blessed Saviour, he tells the Jews, *If I bear witness to my self, my witness is not true; the Works, which my*

my Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. So hath it pleas'd Almighty God to communicate his Will unto Reasonable Creatures, not without appealing first unto their Judgments, by His great Works wrought by his Servants; for without having first given sufficient Grounds for Belief, Justice cannot condemn for disbelieving. Now let ev'ry Person, who pretends to a particular *Commission from God*, (unless he comes with a greater Character than the Prophets, Apostles, and Jesus Christ,) let *him* produce the same Credentials, if he desires to be believ'd; for without *these Signs*, even the Son of God himself would not *force* a Faith upon Reasonable Men.

2. But some may say, that *They* have this supernatural Evidence of the Spirit of God residing upon *their* Teacher in a most extraordinary manner, which manifests it self by *powerful Workings* in Him, and in *miraculous Effects* upon others.

However, this cannot be suppos'd to be a *common Case*, for we must consider, that the Presence of the Holy Spirit in *this* degree, is a most solemn and sacred Gift; and not bestow'd upon any to play Tricks with, (as Stories in the Popish Legends would make us believe.) 'Tis the good Grace of God, that we have the Assistances of his Holy Spirit proportion'd to our *Wants*; but 'tis great Impiety to imagine, that we may have them to serve our Ambition and Wantonness. And therefore it was our *Saviour's* Observation, that it is an evil and adulterous Generation which seeketh after Signs; and it may be our *own*, that the Times of the greatest Ignorance and Superstition have always afforded the best Mart for these Miracles: all which have vanish'd before the clear Light of the Holy Scriptures, no *other* Conviction being now necessary, than that which the Gospel of Jesus Christ (constantly preach'd and truly expounded) brings to the Minds of all true Believers

which

which supercedes the pretence of these Miracles being from God; and shews us likewise, that the Son of Man came to destroy the Works of the Devil; by which the Power of Darkness also, is so far subdued, that the Deceptions of Satan can neither be so common nor open as heretofore. So that however strange the *Appearances* may be (upon which this Pretence is grounded) we have great Reason either to suspect their *Truth*, or to look upon them as the unknown Effects of some *Natural Causes*, rather than to believe them either *Miracles* from God, or *Delusions* from the Devil.

But, allowing these Works to be true and real; that is, without Deceit in him that professeth to do them, and above the Capacity of the Beholders to comprehend the Cause of them; yet we are not presently to give up our Faith unto every one that can work a *strange* thing. For that this Power is not from God, we have *All* reason to doubt: but how far it may be permitted to the Devil, to produce prodigious Effects, (either by *exceeding* or by *going besides* the common Course of Nature) we cannot take upon us to determine; because we neither know how large that Sphere is, in which Spirits act; nor, how far the Malice and Subtilty of that bold Spirit (which durst attack the ever-blessed Son of God) may be suffered to deceive us: Nor, *Lastly*, how far it may please God to lengthen out his Chain, and for our Iniquities, to give us up to his Buffetings.

This is certain, that there have been such Delusions from an *Infernal Power*, and *Diabolical Spirit*, and may possibly be so again; tho' 'tis a sad Omen of the declining Power of the Gospel where they prevail much: It is certain likewise, that *whatever* this Power of the Devil is, 'tis given unto him from God, either as a Tryal of our *Faith*, or as a Judgment for our *Sins*: upon which account, Sorcerers, Magicians, and False Prophets have been in most Ages of the Church, and have deceiv'd many. We read of

of no fewer than 400 False Prophets at *one Time*, into whose Mouths the Lord had put a Lying Spirit; that they might deceive Ahab to his destruction, 1 Kings 22. And in the Acts we read of Simon the Magician, who had bewitched the People of Samaria, and that to him they had regard, saying, (from the Lowest to the Greatest) that this Man was the **Great Power** of God, because for a long time he had bewitched them with his Sorceries, Acts 8.

Now, this we have reason to believe is permitted by God.
 1. Either as a Tryal of the Faithful, as God tells the Jews, Deut. 13. that tho' the Sign or Wonder did come to pass which the False Prophet foretold, yet that they were not to hearken to his Words: For the Lord your God proveth you by this, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your Heart, and with all your Soul. Or else,
 2. It is the last Punishment of the Wicked in this World, in order to their Eternal destruction in the next: For St. Paul speaking of this Simon Magus, says, that as for him, his coming was after the working of Satan, with all Power, and Signs, and Lying Wonders. And as for his Followers, that for their Wickedness, God should send them strong Delusions that they should believe a Lye, that they all might be damn'd, 2 Thess. 2. which shows, that a very great Power of doing many strange things may be from the Devil, and that (for their Sins) Men may be so far given over by God, as to believe his Delusions.

3. But (blessed be God!) these Pretences are neither so common (nor so real) that we need have recourse to this Cause for their Solution. And if a strong and violent Enthusiasm does sometimes produce surprising Effects, yet I question not but that (even in the highest degrees of it) it may be attributed to other Causes.

By

By Enthusiasm, I understand a strong Fervency or Pregnancy of the Soul, Spirits or Brain, which does really and truly produce strange Effects, that are often mistaken to be *supernatural*. And *this* Impulse is *no where* more powerful upon the Minds of weak and distemper'd Men, than in their Contemplations of Religion; which, by abstracting the Thoughts from *Material* Objects, and fixing them intensely upon the Meditation of Divine Mysteries, draw the Soul, as it were, into a *close* Retirement within it self, and carry it (in a manner) *out* of the Body, setting it at a distance from the outward Senses; which kind of *Trance*, we may observe (in a *lower* degree) to be frequent in Contemplative and Melancholy Persons, who suffer often this sort of Alienation of Mind, that they neither see nor hear any thing done before them.

Now, as some Men by a *Natural* Indisposition of Body, and disorder of the Humours, are more *readily* inclin'd to these Ecstasies; so is it possible, that *others* may *Artificially* improve their Tempers very much into them. And then (in these Trances) what *Visions* may they not see! What *Revelations* may they not hear! And if these Raptures shall be accompanied with *Words*, how *vehement* may they be in themselves! and how *transporting* in the Affections of their Hearers! Doubtless, strange things may be done this way *naturally*; barely by the Effects of a Disease, or by the Power of some sounds, in which an Itching Ear may be extravagantly delighted; insomuch, that when a Man is dispos'd *readily* to meet them, and *prepar'd* to receive their Influence, 'tis Inconceivable what Tumults and Disorders they may raise in his Soul.

I would not be mistaken to have spoken *lightly* of spiritual Gifts, or to have detracted from that Divine Illumination, by which God imparts his Holy Spirit, and communicates himself intimately to truly Pious Souls. There are Good Men doubtless (whose Vertues we ought to admire, and endeavour to imitate) who by their Holiness of Life

have rais'd themselves high in God's Favour, and enjoy the sweet and comfortable Fellowship of his blessed Spirit, in *Sobriety*, to the great advantage of others: And tho' there should be *Abuses* found, yet the Subject is too *Sacred* to be treated with lightness and scoffing. Nevertheless it is plain, that this matter *may* be mistaken, and is (I fear) not seldom Counterfeited; and in both Cases it proves a most dangerous Imposture.

For (at the best) Enthusiasm is a *gross* and most pernicious Error in Religion: It is incredible to what Deceptions a Man lays himself open, who thinks it a great *Spiritual* Attainment, to have his *Reason* mightily disturb'd, and himself possess'd with unusual Agitations of Mind, in order to receive Divine Influences. Whereas, the resemblance of God's Holy *Spirit* appears no where more *brightly* in us, than in Calm undisturb'd Reason; God's *own* Image being the Pattern after which the Rational Soul was created in this Frame. It must be the *Heart which is fix'd, and set aright*, that makes the *nearest* approaches unto Heaven; but whatever throws the Faculties of the Mind into *disorder*, and drives it furiously from a quiet Possession of right Reason, can never produce any similitude of God's Holy Spirit in the Soul of Man; which then only bears the truest likeness to its high Original, when it is in the best Estate of Tranquility and Sedateness, as it was in *Adam* before his Fall, and in our blessed Saviour all his Life.

This Reflection in general, may serve to make some discrimination between the Effects of God's Spirit, and of Enthusiasm: For if, of the one; they may be observed to be boisterous and fierce, transporting the Judgment, disordering all the Faculties of the Soul, and enraging as New Wine; if the Fruits of the other Recorded in the Gospel, are Meekness, Gentleness, and Humility; if its Convictions upon good and Holy Men have been as the Dew falling upon a Fleece of Wool; and its Illuminations as the silent Ray, piercing and enlightning powerfully, but without

noise;

noise ; These different Effects (and consequently the contrary Principle from which they proceed) may be readily distinguish'd.

Let us view an Humble and Holy Man, compos'd in his Religion, and fervent ; but sober, in his Devotions ; one full of Charity and good Works, Upright and Just ; Good-natur'd, Meek, and Merciful ; and from thence let us turn our Eyes upon the furious Enthusiast, Raging and Turbulent, and Damning most of Mankind ; Rigid, Implacable, and Unmerciful to all, not of his own Sect ; and we may easily discern which of these two doth the most resemble the Pure, Peaceable, and Almerciful Spirit of God.

Now, as for the Examples of the Old Prophets (brought often to justifie these Enthusiastick Transports) this may suffice to shew their difference in short (which I have hinted at before :) That tho' the Spirit of true Prophecy may seem to have been Ecstatical in some Instances, yet it work'd only upon the Animal Part with such violence, but never dispossest the Prophet of his Reason : He was acted indeed by a Spirit more potent than his own ; but this Spirit maintain'd a clearness and consistency of Reason, and strength and solidity of Judgment, and did not ravish the Mind, but inform and enlighten it : Upon which account St. *Jerom* (*In Præf. ad It.*) objects, that abreption of Mind, which is proper to Enthusiasm, unto the *Montanists*, as an Indication of the Falsity of their Spirit. And St. *Chrysostom* states this difference betwixt the Spirit of true Prophecy and of Enthusiasm. " 'Tis the Property (says he) of a Diviner " to be Ecstatical, to undergo a great Violence, and to " be toss'd and hurried about like a Madman : But not " so the Prophet, who is with his Understanding awake, " and his Mind in a sober and orderly Temper ; and " in all he speaks he knows what he saith, 29 *Hom. in 1 Ep. ad Cor.*

However, they know not what Spirit they are of, who think that the Spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the same with that of *Elias*; It is not Rage and Revenge, but Meekness and Charity that are the Effects of it; not Arts to possess themselves with Fury, and to transport the Affections of others; but Simplicity and Plainness to manifest the Integrity of the Preacher, and to inform the Understanding of the Hearer. And accordingly we see, that altho' the Apostle had the most plentiful Effusions of the Spirit of God, yet they spoke the words of Soberness; and that no one of their Converts was ever made Mad by them; tho' some of them were naturally Eloquent, and all had the Gift of Tongues; yet St. *Paul* disclaims wholly all Artifices of Excellency of Speech, and the Power of enticing Words, showing, that the strength of the Gospel was to consist in the Power of God, and not in the Wisdom of Men; and well knowing, that whatever present Influence and Agitation a ready and vehement flow of Words may raise in the Passions, yet the Convictions of the Judgment from calm Reason, plainly deliver'd, are more durable, being laid upon a Foundation which will last upon the Mind, when the Passions are allayed, and this ecstatick Power extinguish'd.

No Crafts therefore of a forc'd and counterfeit Enthusiasm (being far distant from Sincerity and good Reason) are proper Instruments either to inforce the Judgment, or to propagate the Faith of the eternal Truths of the Gospel: And even when it shall be real, those Diseases of the Body, which contribute most to a sickness of the Brain, and raging of the Fancy, may not improperly be said to produce it: Infomuch, that Enthusiasm is so far from the Spirit of God, that it is a Distemper of Mind next to Madness. And if the Observations of some Judicious Men be true, that the Enthusiasms of the Ancient Poets did very much advance their Idolatry, who deliver'd down the Heathenish Religion, dress'd up with such kind of Inspirations and familiar

familiar Converſes with their Gods (by which they drew Men inſenſibly from the uſe of their right Reaſon, and employ'd their Minds upon *Muſing*, and expecting ſtrange Viſions and Raptures): I pray God that we may not be ſadly ſenſible of the ill Effects it may have amongſt us! by drawing Men away from a judicious Survey of the *Gospel* into a ſpeculation of *ſomething* which they fancy more Sublime, Viſionary, and Spiritual; and by making them at laſt deny *real* Truths, and renounce their Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. It is evident, that Enthuſiaſm hath produc'd theſe Effects in *ſome* Men, and that where-ever it goes, it takes ſomewhat alike Steps: It is true likewiſe, that the introducing of the *Gospel* into the World, was by beating down of theſe Enthuſiaſms and private Inſpirations, and by advancing the true uſe of right Reaſon: For the performance of which Task, the Wiſdom of *Socrates* is ſo deſervedly admir'd by ſome of the Ancient Fathers, who reduc'd the Age he liv'd in, out of this hot-brain'd Ecſtaſical Temper, and by plain Truths and ſound Morality, prepar'd Mens Minds for the receiving of Chriſtianity.

All that I ſhall farther obſerve of *this* Enthuſiaſm, (be it *Real* or be it *Pretended*) is, that many great and ſpreading Deceits have prevail'd in the World, by the help of this Craft, and from the Maſters of it. It has not only been a Friend to the Idolatry and Infidelity of *old* Times, but to *Mahometiſm*, and to *Jefuitiſm* (the worſt ſort of Bigotry and Superſtition in theſe latter Ages.) *Mahomet* knew very well what uſe to make of his *Epileptick* Fits, and what Authority, Veneration, and Sanctity, Viſions, Revelations, and an intimate Commerce with the Spirit of God, would gain him amongſt the Ignorant and Superſtitious. Nor can we ſuppoſe *Ignatius Loyola* to be unſkill'd in this Art, when the Hiſtorian *Maffeius* (among other ſtrange Relations in his Life) tells us, that his Ardor and Fervency at his Devotions were ſo *very* great, that in his Praying, he was often liſted from the Ground almoſt four Cubits high; the

the *Spirit* all the while bearing up the weight of his *Body*. And the Life of *Sister Catharine of Jesus*, will afford us many more such Prodigies of Visions, Ecstacies, Raptures, and Revelations.

Now, what hath been said upon this Subject, will be sufficient to satisfy a serious Man, that there is great Danger of being led away from the Truth by these Pretences. He that considers *soberly*, that no less than his Eternal Salvation is a stake, will think himself oblig'd to examine well, and to try whether the Spirits are from God. And, if any thing shall happen surprizing or *seemingly* Miraculous, he will *reflect*, what Power the Devil is sometimes permitted to shew by his Missionaries, and what Delusions some Men themselves have been under, from Natural Distempers of the Body; which will teach him, not to attribute every thing to God's *Holy Spirit*, which he sees or hears *uncommon* in a Man: Whether it be a violent Heat and Ecstasick Fervency in Prayer: If 'tis *possible* that these may be a cover and pretence for devouring Widows Houses; or whether it be an *unnatural* vehemency in Speech, with strange Emotions and Convulsions in bringing it forth; if a Fever or Phrensie can loosen the Tongue in a like manner, and open its way to the same tumultuary Utterance: In short, whether it be Vision or Revelation, Prophecies, Inward Light, or whatever else we may think strange and unusual. In all these (because 'tis *possible* we may be deceiv'd, because we are forewarn'd, and because 'tis a case of the most *serious* concern to us) we ought therefore not to be hasty in giving them the Name of the Gifts of the Holy and ever-blessed Spirit of God, but rather suspend our Belief, until we have a more sure Evidence that they do really proceed from thence. Which brings me to my Second Particular.

II. To lay down one general Rule, by which we may try the Spirits, whether they are of God.

St. John lays down one Rule in the Verse following my Text, *Hereby we know the Spirit of God; every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh, is of God,* which will continue (as long as this Gospel doth) to be a standing Argument against the Spirit of those Men amongst us, who pretend the most to the Sacred Impulses of the Holy Ghost, and yet deny the *Humanity* of their Blessed Saviour.

But *this*, must not be understood as a *General* Test, it being design'd to prove a *particular* sort of Hereticks (such as *Cerintus* and *Ebion*) who disputed against the Coming of our Saviour in the *Flesh*. However, we may reasonably conclude from hence, that (in like manner) the denying of any Article in the Christian Faith (or any Gospel-Doctrine) will continue to be a Mark in all Ages of the Church, to distinguish False Teachers by.

For these Doctrines were establish'd at first by innumerable Miracles of Christ and his Apostles, and of all the Primitive Preachers of the Gospel: And they were confirm'd afterwards by (that which is rather a greater Testimony than all these Miracles) the unanimous Consent and Faith of the whole Christian World; who (not giving up their assent blindly, nor admitting any part of the New Testament without much Controversie) have left to all succeeding Ages an undeniable Argument of its Truth; In that their Differences argued them impartial Searchers, and their wonderful Concurrence afterwards in receiving the present Canon of Holy Writ, demonstrates them to be true Believers of all its Doctrines, and upon good Ground to be so; which shews the reasonableness of that Axiom laid down by *Vincentius*, "That that which was believed every where, always, and by all Members of the Catho-
"lick

“lick Church, is the true Catholick Faith, and gives us Warrant to assert, that the Contradicting of any of these Articles or Doctrines, will at this Day likewise argue Error in the Christian Religion, and a false Pretence to the Spirit of God.

For none of these Articles of the Christian Faith (believed by all, and at all times) not any of these Doctrines of the Gospel (thus attested by Clouds of Witnesses, and an infinite number of Miracles) may now be rejected at any Man's Pleasure, or by the impulse of any private Spirit, without the loss of the true Faith; nor are they to be overthrown either upon the appearance, or upon the Reality of Miracles of less Number and Weight; nor to be left for the sake of any Party of Men, how numerous soever their Followers may be, or how great soever their own Excellencies: And there can be no Reason now produc'd of so great Authority for the forsaking of these Doctrines, as that Power is by which they have been established and confirm'd.

This Rule of Faith therefore stands firm and inviolable against all Opposers whatsoever: Concerning some of which *Vincentius* saith very appositely to our present Times, “That there are Men who dare to Teach and Promise, that in their Church, that is, (says he) in the Conventicle of their Communion, there is a great and special, and plainly a kind of Personal Grace of God, and Residence of his Holy Spirit; insomuch, that without any Labour, without any Study or Industry, whosoever are of their number shall be Divinely Inspired; by which (saith he) Hereticks are wont in a wonderful manner to deceive many.” *Cap. 26.*

But notwithstanding these Pretences, otherwise hath been the Sentence of the Church, as may be witnessed in *Arrius*, *Montanus*, *Nestorius*, *Photinus*, *Apollinaris*, *Origen*, *Tertullian*, and many others, who stand at this day condemn'd by it: Men (especially the two last, as *Vincentius* saith, *Cap. 23, 24.*) of wonderful Abilities and Holy Lives, who

who had been strong Champions of the Christian Faith in most of its Doctrines; but being unsound in some one, or more Particulars, became a great Temptation to the People of God, by reason of their known Worth and high Character.

Nevertheless, neither could their *former* Merits excuse them for their *present* Errors, nor their Orthodoxy in the main, defend them from Censure in any one rotten Principle. And if *We* proceed by the same Rule, *We* may know some at this day, if they deny the Sacraments instituted by our Saviour, and all Gospel-Ordinances; others, if they deny Infant-Baptism; others, if they deny the Divinity of Christ; which Doctrines (if warranted by the Word of God, and by the continual Consent of all Christians) are so many unerring Marks upon those that deny them, that they have not the Spirit of God.

For this Holy Spirit leads into all Truth, and cannot be repugnant to it self: It is by this Power and Wisdom that these Doctrines have been established in the Gospels of Jesus Christ; that therefore cannot proceed from the Spirit of God by which any of them shall be opposed: And the Scripture being inspired by God (as we Christians consent) we may most justly set up the Doctrines contain'd in them for a Test of all the Claims made to his Holy Spirit; and either as they agree or disagree with that which is there revealed, pronounce them either true or false.

To this purpose it is, that we are caution'd by St. Paul, *that tho' we our selves (saith the Apostle) or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel, than that which we have preach'd unto you, let him be accursed!* Gal. i. This wholly excludes all pretended new Commissions from God in ought contrary to the Scripture; and for what is there confirm'd, they are superfluous: This determines likewise the Canon of our Faith, by shewing the *Standard*, unto which all Doctrines are to be reduc'd: From whence we may conclude, that neither Men, (Holy and Upright, and

Orthodox in the greatest part of the Christian Faith,) nor Apostle, nor Angel from Heaven, are now to be believ'd peremptorily in their preaching a *New Doctrine*, or in their rejecting an *Old one*; as also that no Person whatsoever can prove the Truth of his Doctrine, and of having the Spirit of God, by his *Miracles*; but that on the contrary, his Spirit and Miracles are to be prov'd by the Soundness and Congruity of his Doctrine, and That to stand the Trial of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are likewise other Marks, by which the Spirit of God is to be known in them upon whom it shall be said to reside: Are *they* meek and humble as their Lord and Saviour? Have *they* that Goodness and Universal Charity, which may manifest *their* Spirit to be the Spirit of God, who is the Father of Infinite Mercies, and the God of all long suffering? Does *their* Wisdom shew it self to be from above, [by being pure and peaceable? Gentle, and easie to be entreated? Full of Mercy, and full of good Works? Without Partiality, and without Hypocrisie?] These are the Genuine Fruits of God's Holy Spirit! And I wish, (for the Peace of Mankind, and the eternal Welfare of their own Souls,) that *These* were the Marks by which all Christians would endeavour to distinguish themselves; and that no one would dare to pretend to the Spirit of God, and the pure Religion of the Gospel, but Those, who have first laid the Foundation of their Holiness in *These* Vertues: For in these alone doth the Holy Spirit of God reside, and the pure Religion of the Gospel consist.

It is the want of this which makes us to dispute so much about the Christian Religion, and to practice so little. For in most things wherein we Protestants differ, there is more of the true and pure Religion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in not contending at all, than there is in those Matters about which we strive; which Disputes notwithstanding, are oftentimes so exceeding sharp, that what was long since observ'd by an Heathen Author, *Am. Marcel.*

Wild

Wild Beasts are not so savage, as Christians differing about Religion. And we enter the Fray not without the loss of that for which we engage so *fiercely*, making Shipwreck of our Faith, by losing our Charity and Humility, which are the only true Indications of God's Holy Spirit working in us : And all the while, these Pretences and Cavils, give too great Occasion to the Atheist to deny God and all Religion.

But to conclude.

I would not be mistaken, from what I have said, to have argued ought against the *Power*, or (as it is commonly objected to us) against the *Assistance* of God's Holy Spirit, as if disclaim'd wholly by the Ministry of this Church; or who then will believe *our* Report? *What* Certainty can we have that our Doctrine is true? And that we expound the Word of God aright? We trust too much, (as our *Adversaries* tell us,) to the Arm of Flesh, to Humane Reasoning, and to *weaker* Humane Learning : And we disown the Spirit of God in *other* Men, because we cannot attain unto it our selves; that Holy Spirit which should lead us into all Truth, and without which we cannot save our spiritual Things aright. Which brings me to my *last* Particular, to shew in short, what a Measure of God's Holy Spirit (as we may humbly presume) is a necessary, and sufficient Qualification for the Ministry of the Gospel.

III. The reading of the most excellent Prayers of our Liturgy, will *fully* answer this Objection to any unprejudic'd Person, where he may find, how earnestly we beg Assistance from Heaven, to render *any* of our Endeavours effectual; and acknowledge, and pray for the Con-
 currence of God's illuminating Spirit, as *more especially* needful, to strengthen our *weak* Eyes, and to enlighten

ten our darken'd Faculties in the *Great Work* of His Ministry.

But *then*, this Illumination is to be understood twofold: *First*, as that, which is annex'd to the using of the Means; or *secondly*, as that, which is suppos'd to work without any Means employ'd for the obtaining of it. Now it is the *former* of these, in which we do place our Confidence. For, seeing that the Providence of God doth not operate commonly, but by the Subordination of those Means, which his Wisdom hath thought fit to prescribe, we dare not presume upon the obtaining so extraordinary a Blessing without the using of our own Endeavours; which we do believe, it is *our* part to perform, before we can hope for any Measure of God's spiritual Assistance: We think, that it is a *most* gracious Act of God's Providence, that He hath suggested unto us *these* Means; which *Humane* Industry is left to improve, and to prepare for his good Blessing that is to crown them. And therefore, as we lay no manner of Claim to the *New, unlabour'd* Illumination of the Enthusiast; so, we do hope, that (by the Blessing of God) we may have our Lot and Part in the *Old Light*; that Inspiration, Assistance, and Concurrence of God, which are always afforded to the Pious, Humble, and industrious.

Upon which Principle, we do not expect the unlabour'd Gift of Tongues; but we believe it a necessary Preparation, (to enable us to expound the Word of God rightly) that we understand in some measure the Languages in which the Scriptures were originally writ; to which end we read the Ancient Fathers, who may reasonably be esteem'd the *truest* Interpreters of the Apostles Writings to whom they immediately succeeded, from whence they understood several Customs and Idioms of Speech better than any living in after-Ages. With fervent and assiduous Prayers (to God for his Divine Assistance) we do employ our Studies faithfully in the Holy Scriptures, looking

looking *idly* for Prophecies and Revelations from Heaven. And if, by the Blessing of God upon these (and our like) Endeavours, we gain the Spirit of Wisdom, the Gift of a sound Judgment, the Attainments of Learning, and the Vertues of Charity, Humility, and leading a Godly Life, we hope that we may be prepar'd for the farther Illuminations of God's Holy Spirit; of which we do believe, that it hath pleas'd him *already* to give us an *Earnest*, by this his blessing upon our *present* Labours, and by these Improvements in the Knowledge of his Word, which without his Grace and Spirit we could *not* have attain'd.

Those, whom it shall please God *thus* to prepare for the Preaching of his Gospel, we trust (of his Mercy) that He will not be wanting to afford all other necessary Assurances to their devout Prayers, for their expounding his Scripture, and for the declaring his Will; and that *they* may hope for the Reward and Success of painful Labourers, if nothing be wanting in themselves or Hearers; and that the *People* may *assure* themselves of Salvation under *our* Ministry, if by a due Administration of the Holy Sacraments, we shall make them capable of being Partakers of the Merits of Christ's Sufferings; If by shewing them the *Terrors* of the Lord, we shall persuade Men to an Holy Life; If we admonish them of their Errors *faithfully*, and instruct them *diligently* in all Gospel-Duties: We trust, that our Labours plac'd with *Sincerity* in these things, will be effectual for the Salvation of their *own* Souls, and of those committed unto our Charge.

And herein, what other thing I pray appears to be *farther* wanting to complete fully the Pastoral Care in all those, who being *lawfully* call'd, shall *conscientiously* exercise the Ministry of Jesus Christ? For where these Duties shall be perform'd in Uprightness and Sincerity, and with true Holiness of Life (tho' we are neither Prophets, nor Healers, nor Workers of Miracles; yet why may we not humbly presume from these Blessings (and doubtless our Confidence

fidence is not in vain in the Lord) that we have all necessary Assistance and Illumination of God's Holy Spirit, after having employ'd our most earnest Prayers and faithful Endeavours? Without which, we dare not carelessly and negligently throw our selves upon Divine Providence in any thing; and much less dare we boldly and rashly lay our Claim to the *Holy Ghost*: But, after our conscientious and painful Labours in the Study and Work of the Ministry of Jesus Christ, we do hope for the *Guidance* of God's Holy Spirit, and, (where through Humane Frailty we *err*,) for his Pardon.

This is the Reason of *our* Hope, who are of this Communion; which will not want a particular Application with the Serious and Unprejudic'd. Let us therefore not be wavering and inconstant, and toss'd about with every Wind! Let us be sober-minded in examining after the Truth! And zealous in the Preservation of it! God gives us all Grace, to admire the Depth of the Riches of his Knowledge, in preserving his True Church and Pure Religion amongst us! God give us an *Understanding* to make the right Use of these Blessings! And an Heart never to forsake them!

Now to Thee, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Three Persons, and One God, be ascribed all Honour and Glory, &c.



F I N I S.